



# NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
JUNE 12, 2006

CONTACT: LYDIA LENKER  
615.741.3763 (OFFICE)  
615.289.9375 (CELL)

## GOVERNOR BREDESEN SIGNS COVER TENNESSEE INTO LAW AFFORDABLE, PORTABLE HEALTH INSURANCE FOR TENNESSEANS

**Nashville** - Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen visited a Nashville-based small business today to sign into law an innovative piece of legislation that extends health insurance to small businesses and uninsured working Tennesseans. The Cover Tennessee Act includes initiatives that extend health coverage to uninsured children, chronically ill adults and creates a low-cost insurance program for uninsured working Tennesseans.

Joining Bredesen at PlumGood Food, which has 23 employees, was a bipartisan group of state lawmakers, state officials and employees, representatives from the National Federation of Independent Business, small businesses owners, uninsured families and health care providers from across the state.

"Cover Tennessee is a fundamentally different approach to providing affordable and portable health insurance coverage to hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans who have no insurance today," said Bredesen. "We are taking a decidedly unique approach to bring health insurance back within the reach of working Tennesseans by relying on voluntary partnerships between the state, employers and the individual. This bold new path enjoys bipartisan support from the Tennessee General Assembly, the NFIB and other business groups and the state's health care industry."

Signed into law today were several programs that extend health insurance to uninsured Tennesseans:

- **Cover Kids** - Creates a partnership between the state and the federal government to extend comprehensive health coverage to uninsured children and pregnant women.
- **AccessTN** - Provides a health insurance plan for seriously ill adults who have previously not been able to obtain private insurance coverage. This is guaranteed issue, comprehensive health coverage for uninsurable adults, and includes premium assistance for low-income participants.
- **CoverTN** - Creates a partnership between the state and private employers to offer guaranteed, affordable, portable, basic health coverage for working uninsured Tennesseans. Includes an option for small businesses to offer CoverTN to all employees.

The legislation also creates Project Diabetes, which expands an educational pilot project to K-8 schools across the state to teach healthy lifestyles and eating habits and launches a grant program to expand treatment options focusing on reducing Type II diabetes and obesity.

During the bill signing ceremony, the Governor highlighted the differences between Cover Tennessee and other efforts to extend health insurance.

"With Cover Tennessee, the state is in control of the program's design, implementation and costs. And unlike other states, Cover Tennessee is voluntary," said Bredesen. "Our role as government is to ensure that anyone who wants health insurance has a shot at getting it, and that is what Cover Tennessee provides. But this is just beginning of the challenge. The success or failure of our efforts will depend on our ability to implement Cover Tennessee and attract the small businesses and uninsured individuals we want to help."

- MORE -

The low-cost CoverTN insurance product is the centerpiece of Governor Bredesen's Cover Tennessee plan. CoverTN will provide targeted health benefits to working uninsured adults for about \$150 per month. Premiums will vary based on age, smoking status and weight. The premiums can be shared between the state and an individual or between the state, an individual and that person's employer.

Governor Bredesen also announced today that safety net services providing transitional assistance for TennCare disenrollees will be extended through the end of 2006. This marks the second extension of several programs previously scheduled to expire on June 30.

###

*NOTES:*

*- A Fact Sheet on the extension of safety net services with additional details about programs being extended through December 31, 2006 is attached.*

*- Today marks the first time the state has used video streaming for a remote event outside of the State Capitol.*



# FACT SHEET

GOVERNOR'S COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

## SAFETY NET SERVICES EXTENDED THROUGH END OF 2006 TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TWICE EXTENDED FOR TENNCARE DISENROLLEES

The transitional assistance for disenrollees previously scheduled to expire on June 30 will now be extended through December 31, 2006.

Programs being extended include:

- **Pharmacy Assistance**, primarily through Rx Outreach, offering free generics for disenrollees through a drug formulary designed for chronic conditions. Additionally, discounts for other drugs are available with an Express Scripts discount card and affordable medications for the severely and persistently mentally ill (SPMI) have also been made available for disenrollees.
- **Diabetes Assistance** through RxOutreach, offering affordable insulin and diabetic supplies.
- **Transplant Assistance** for disenrollees who received a solid organ transplant while on TennCare and who continue to need anti-rejection medications and a limited number of related services.
- **Dialysis Assistance** through The National Kidney Foundation, offering medication for dialysis patients with end-stage renal disease.
- **Cancer Assistance**, offering a subsidy for oncology services and chemotherapy. This program also makes services available for patients requiring hospice care. This program is specifically for disenrollees diagnosed with cancer and prescribed chemotherapy or radiation at the time of disenrollment.
- **Case Management for Hemophilia** through The Tennessee Hemophilia and Bleeding Disorders Foundation, this program connects Hemophiliac disenrollees with case management services, insurance case management and pharmacy assistance.
- **Home Oxygen Assistance** through the Tennessee Association for Home Care, offering oxygen concentrators for disenrollees who need home oxygen according to Medicare's medical guidelines.

Unlike any other state in the nation, in June 2005 the Tennessee General Assembly appropriated funds to implement transitional Safety Net programs to help TennCare disenrollees bridge the gap from TennCare coverage to other health care solutions.

As of May, 2006, over 112,000 individuals, all disenrollees from TennCare, have been able to get free or discounted prescriptions through Tennessee's Health Care Safety Net, primarily for chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and asthma as well as some mental health conditions.

For more information on the Tennessee Health Care Safety Net or to sign up to receive information about CoverTN, AccessTN, and CoverKids, call the Tennessee Health Options hotline at 1-888-486-9355 or visit

[www.TNHealthOptions.com](http://www.TNHealthOptions.com)

###